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# News Release

## **Sussex County employee earns Wastewater Operator of the Year award**

**Georgetown, Del., May 2, 2013:** A change in career paths more than a decade ago, from testing school children then to testing water samples today, has led one Sussex County employee to top honors in her field of work.

Ann F. Hobbs, a wastewater operator and laboratory manager for the South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility near Bethany Beach, was honored Thursday, May 2, 2013, as the Delaware Wastewater Operator of the Year during a ceremony at the Delaware Technical Community College-Owens Campus in Georgetown. Ms. Hobbs, of Frankford, was selected by the college for the honor from a field of nine nominees from across the First State. There are 459 licensed operators in Delaware.



Ann F. Hobbs

The Wastewater Operator of the Year award is handed out each year to those nominees who exemplify the highest skill, discipline, and excellence in the profession. Nominees must hold a valid Delaware Operator's License, and their performance records must show a consistent, above-average dedication to the betterment of the environment. The award has been given each year since 1997; Ms. Hobbs is the fifth Sussex County employee to earn the honor.

"The most important thing to me is to be recognized by my peers. It's a great honor to be recognized," said Ms. Hobbs, who worked 15 years as a school teacher before an interest in the environment and a needed change of pace led her to answer a classified ad for wastewater technicians in 1999. "I do work hard, and the quality of my work is very important

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Sussex County employee earns Wastewater Operator award to me. Being a scientist, accuracy and precision are very important. I think that's what I am best at."

As a wastewater operator, Ms. Hobbs helps to maintain wastewater collection, treatment facilities, water production, and water distribution at the plant that serves more than 22,000 customers in the southeastern part of Sussex County. The South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility is the largest of Sussex County's four public wastewater treatment facilities, handling between 2 million and 5 million gallons of wastewater each day.

Ms. Hobbs also serves as the facility's laboratory manager, overseeing the 365-day-a-year testing and monitoring to ensure the treated wastewater is of the highest quality. All wastewater facilities must be in compliance with State permits and regulations.

Her career change has not only led her to honors among her peers, but in a way it has brought her full circle, and back to the classroom she left 15 years ago. In addition to her full-time duties for the County, Ms. Hobbs also works part time as an instructor at DelTech where she is teaching the wastewater operators of tomorrow.

County Council President Michael H. Vincent lauded Ms. Hobbs for her award, and said it should be a source of pride for her and the County. "This honor is a testament to the kind of quality, hard-working individuals we are fortunate to have working for the County," President Vincent said. "We congratulate Ann on this prestigious award."

The annual award is co-sponsored by the Delaware Rural Water Association; the Delaware Office of Drinking Water; the Delaware Division of Water Resources; the Water and Wastewater Operators Association, Eastern Shore Chapter; and the Delaware On-Site Wastewater Recycling Association.

Ms. Hobbs holds a bachelor of arts degree in history from Smith College, as well as a master's in history from UCLA. After leaving her first career as an educator, she earned an associate degree in environmental engineering from Delaware Tech while working for the County, and is currently pursuing a master's of business administration in environmental stewardship from Wilmington University.

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